

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BONN 05028 01 OF 02 201743Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----062960 201745Z /43
P 201629Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6912

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 05028

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OGEN, SHUM, UG, GW
SUBJECT: UGANDA: FATE OF MARK ELIAS

REFS: (A) BONN 4764; (B) CAIRO 8317

1. ALTHOUGH HE STANDS BY HIS BELIEF THAT MARK ELIAS IS
NO LONGER ALIVE, FRG AMBASSADOR FROEWIS HAS INFORMED
THE FOREIGN OFFICE ABOUT ONE POSSIBLE WAY TO CONFIRM
ELIAS' FATE. THE TEXT OF FROEWIS' TELEGRAM FOLLOWS:

BEGIN TEXT:

A LAST POSSIBILITY TO CONFIRM THE DEATH OF MR. ELIAS
WOULD BE TO CONTACT LT. COL. ITABUKA, WHO WAS CHIEF
OF THE STATE RESEARCH BUREAU UNTIL LAST FALL WHEN
FOUR AIR FORCE OFFICERS ESCAPED FROM CUSTODY. ITABUKA,
HIMSELF, WAS IMPRISONED FOR A LONG TIME AS A RESULT
AND WAS ONLY RELEASED FROM DETENTION PENDING INVESTI-
GATION AFTER MANY WEEKS. HE IS TODAY COMMANDER OF
THE BATALLION IN FORT PORTAL.

I WOULD ONLY APPROACH ITABUKA ON THE EXPLICIT
INSTRUCTIONS OF THE FOREIGN OFFICE, SINCE HE MIGHT
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PERCEIVE AN INQUIRY ABOUT THE FATE OF THE BRITISH
CITIZEN ELIAS AS INTERFERENCE IN UGANDA'S INTERNAL
AFFAIRS.

THE DELICACY OF THE "ELIAS SPY CASE" IN UGANDAN EYES
IS ILLUSTRATED BY THE FACT THAT THE UGANDAN CHARGE IN
KIGALI STATED THAT HE WAS NOT IN A POSITION TO PURSUE

ANY FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS WITHOUT ENDANGERING
HIMSELF. FROEWIS.

END TEXT.

2. OUR WORKING-LEVEL CONTACTS IN THE FOREIGN OFFICE
TELL US THAT INSTRUCTIONS FOR FROEWIS TO DO ANY MORE
THAN HE HAS ALREADY DONE WOULD PROBABLY HAVE TO COME
FROM THE STATE SECRETARY LEVEL AND THEY WOULD BE "MOST
RELUCTANT" TO RECOMMEND SUCH ACTION. THEY BELIEVE THAT
A CONTACT BETWEEN FROEWIS AND ITABUKA COULD NOT BE KEPT
SECRET, AND SHOULD UGANDAN AUTHORITIES LEARN THE
SUBJECT OF THEIR TALKS, BOTH MEN MIGHT BE OPEN TO
CHARGES OF COMPLICITY IN ELIAS' ALLEGED SPYING
ACTIVITIES. IN THE VIEW OF THE UGANDAN DESK (VON
STENGLIN AND KREMER), TO RISK FROEWIS OR THE GERMAN
EMBASSY BY MAKING CONTACT WITH ITABUKA WOULD JEOPARDIZE
NOT ONLY GERMAN-UGANDAN RELATIONS BUT ALSO THE GERMAN
EMBASSY'S CAPABILITY TO PROTECT US INTERESTS AT WHAT
COULD BE A MOST CRUCIAL TIME.

3. WE SUGGEST THAT BEFORE THE DEPARTMENT CONSIDERS
ASKING THE GERMANS TO GO TO THE WALL IN THIS CASE ON

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6913

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 05028

EXDIS

BEHALF OF A NON-AMERICAN CITIZEN, WE EXPLORE OTHER WAYS
TO CONFIRM ELIAS' FATE. ONE POSSIBILITY WOULD BE TO
HAVE SOMEONE ELSE CONTACT ITABUKA--PREFERABLY A
RELATIVE OR CLOSE FRIEND OF ELIAS. THIS OPTION,
HOWEVER, HAS THE OBVIOUS DRAWBACK OF EXPOSING THE
INTERMEDIARY TO THE SAME TYPE OF ACCUSATIONS OF

COMPLICITY OR WORSE. THE DEPARTMENT MIGHT ALSO CONSIDER SOME WAY OF INVOLVING THE BRITISH (IN NEW YORK OR ELSEWHERE) IN CONTACTS WITH THE UGANDANS ON THE ELIAS CASE.

4. IT WOULD SEEM TO BE MUCH SAFER FOR ALL CONCERNED, HOWEVER, IF A FURTHER INQUIRY COULD BE CONDUCTED OUTSIDE UGANDA BY A NEUTRAL PARTY. IN THIS REGARD, WE NOTE THAT BARON VON BLOMBERG, PRESIDENT OF THE WORLD UNITED RELIGIONS ORGANIZATIONS, WILL BE MEETING WITH AMIN IN CAIRO ON APRIL 3. VON BLOMBERG PLANS TO TALK TO AMIN ABOUT THE BAN OF THE 27 RELIGIOUS SECTS, WE DO NOT KNOW IF HE WOULD BE WILLING TO UNDERTAKE THE ADDITIONAL HUMANITARIAN BURDEN OF ASKING AMIN ABOUT ELIAS. IF HE WERE WILLING, HIS INQUIRY WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO BE MISCONSTRUED AS INTERFERENCE AND AMIN, TO FURTHER DEMONSTRATE HIS "NEW LEAF" POLICY, MIGHT PROVIDE SOME USEFUL INFORMATION. IN ANY EVENT, MAKING AMIN AWARE OF INTERNATIONAL INTEREST IN THE ELIAS CASE
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COULD DO LITTLE HARM.

5. ACTION REQUESTED: REFTEL B INDICATES VON BLOMBERG MAY BE IN THE FRG ALREADY; IF SO, WE EXPECT HIM TO CONTACT THE EMBASSY. IF THE DEPARTMENT WISHES US TO RAISE THE ELIAS MATTER WITH HIM, WE WOULD APPRECIATE INSTRUCTIONS ASAP.
STOESSEL

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